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HISTORY OF THE HIGH SCHOOL FOR NEGROES IN WASHINGTON

If one is making a collection of striking contrasts between *what once was, but now is*, he should certainly include in this list the Preparatory High School established for Negro youth in the National Capital, November, 1870, and the beautiful new Dunbar High School which was dedicated January 15, 1917. It is indeed a far cry from the basement of the Presbyterian Church in which this first Preparatory High School was located and the magnificent brick, stone-trimmed building of Elizabethan architecture with a frontage of 401 feet which was recently christened the Dunbar High School in honor of the poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar. This new school represents an outlay of more than a half a million dollars. The ground cost the government \$60,000, the building and equipment \$550,000, and it is considered one of the most complete and beautiful institutions for Negro youth in the country.¹ There is a faculty of 48 teachers,

¹ The auditorium has a large stage, seating capacity for 1,500, with provisions made for presenting motion pictures. The pipe organ in the auditorium offers musical advantages which the pupils have never before enjoyed. The lunch room having a modern kitchen for the preparation of hot foods contributes greatly to the health and comfort of both teachers and pupils. The efficiency of the music department has been greatly enhanced by the five pianos which have been installed. Standing on the balconies provided for visitors one may see the large gymnasiums for both boys and girls in which are dressing rooms provided with shower baths and the most up-to-date equipment. The printing plant is valued at \$4,000. The classes in bookkeeping and accounting will have the great advantage of receiving instruction in a real bank, for a banking department has been provided with a safe and windows and all the other modern facilities found in such an institution.

In the dining room and the living room, each having modern furniture, the girls in the domestic science course may learn by actual experience how to lay a table, arrange furniture and keep house. Botany, zoology, chemistry and physics are taught in laboratories and lecture rooms which occupy practically the whole basement floor. In the department of physics there is a particularly fine apparatus, which represents the careful collection and selection of many years. The wireless outfit which is soon to be installed will greatly increase the advantages enjoyed by the pupils.

many of them being graduates from the leading colleges and universities of the country, and 1,252 pupils are enrolled, 545 boys and 707 girls.

It would have required a vivid and fertile imagination indeed for a pupil who attended that first high school to have dreamed of an institution so comprehensive and efficient as the high school of to-day. In fact, the first high school for Negro youth was not a high school at all. It was, as its name indicated, a Preparatory High School established in 1870. It was mainly composed of pupils completing the last two years of the grammar grades, although, according to the school report of that year, a small number of students were pursuing the high school course.² The new institution labored under several decided disadvantages. In the first place, the teaching force was inadequate, as there was only one instructor for 45 pupils. Sufficient time for advanced studies was not given and the school suffered also from the loss of pupils employed to meet the growing demand for teachers in the lower grades.³

The first class would have graduated in 1875, but the demand for teachers being so much greater than the supply, the first two classes were drawn into the teaching corps, before they had completed the prescribed course.⁴ It was not

Nothing is more gratifying to the visitor than the spacious library on the second floor of the building, which is complete in its appointments, with a capacity for 4,337 volumes and facilities for the accommodation of 185 students. On the first floor are the administration offices and a study hall with a seating capacity for 106 students. In their armory under the Auditorium the Cadets have space enough for several companies and there is also a rifle range for target practice. In this new building there are 35 class rooms, 5 retiring rooms, an emergency room, 7 locker rooms and locker accommodations for 1,500 pupils. A greenhouse and a roof garden are being constructed and it is hoped that Congress may make an appropriation for building a stadium in the rear of the school.

The course of study in the Dunbar High School includes all the academic and business subjects taught in similar schools of accredited standing, as well as domestic science, printing, physical training and military science.

² Annual Report of the Colored Schools of Washington and Georgetown, 1872-73, p. 31.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 62, and 95.

⁴ First Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public Schools of the D. C., 1875-76, pp. 174, 181.

until 1877, therefore, that the first high school commencement was held, eleven pupils being awarded diplomas. These were Dora F. Baker, Mary L. Beason, Fannie M. Costin, Julia C. Grant, Fannie E. McCoy, Cornelia A. Pinckney, Carrie E. Taylor, Mary E. M. Thomas, James C. Craig, John A. Parker, and James B. Wright. Three members of this class are now teaching in the Washington public schools. Of the capabilities of the pupils and conditions of the school, Superintendent Newton in his annual report said: "The progress which has been made in the organization and the perfecting of an efficient school system in a brief period has probably few parallels in any part of the country. The capabilities of the pupils in general for acquiring knowledge have been demonstrated to be not inferior to those of any children in the country."⁵

The first principal of the Preparatory High School was Miss Emma J. Hutchins, a native of New Hampshire. Like many white men and women who came from the North at that time, Miss Hutchins was fired with zeal to do everything in her power to educate and uplift the youth of the newly emancipated race. She served as principal of the O Street, now the John F. Cook, School and was then placed in charge of the Preparatory High School in 1870. After teaching here one year, Miss Hutchins resigned to accept a position in Oswego County, New York. There was no dissatisfaction on the part of either Miss Hutchins or of the people whom she served, but she resigned, because, as she said, there were among the Negroes themselves teachers thoroughly equipped to take up the work and carry it on and she could find employment elsewhere. From one who knew her personally comes the statement, "Miss Hutchins' term of service in the Washington public schools was brief, but the impress she made upon those with whom she came into contact has remained indelibly fixed through the years that have followed. High ideals, conscientious performance of duty under adverse conditions and loyalty to the

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1874-75, p. 252.

interest of her pupils—hers was indeed the spirit of the true teacher.”

In the third report of the Board of Trustees the Public Schools Superintendent, George F. T. Cook, tells us: “The pupils first transferred to this Preparatory High School, as well as those for two or three subsequent years, had completed only the sixth year of the seven required for the completion of the school course at that time—hence the name Preparatory High School.” But the superintendent recommended that the transfer of small classes of pupils in the first grade of the grammar course from the several school districts be discontinued, and that in lieu thereof there be two central grammar schools for the accommodation of all pupils in the last year of the grammar course—one to be located in the Summer or Stevens building and the other in the Lincoln building. This was intended to bring into the high school only those pupils pursuing advanced studies. The object of this Preparatory High School, according to Mr. Cook, was twofold: “to economize teaching force by concentrating under one teacher several small classes of the same grade of attainment, located in different parts of the city, and to present to the pupils of the schools incentives to higher aim in education. In both respects,” says he, “it has been eminently successful, perhaps more so in the latter, since it has furnished to the teacherships of these schools and those of the surrounding country many teachers.”⁶

In the fall of 1871 Miss Mary J. Patterson succeeded Miss Hutchins as principal of the high school, which was then located in the Stevens building on 21st Street during that year. Miss Patterson was graduated from Oberlin College with the degree of A.B. in 1862. So far as the records show, she has the distinction of being the first woman, of African blood, to receive a college education. When Miss Patterson attended Oberlin College, she took what was called the *gentleman's course*, which required a study

⁶ Third Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Colored Public Schools of Washington and Georgetown, The Preparatory High School.

of not only Latin and Greek, but the higher mathematics as well. It doubtless received the name *gentleman's course*, because at that time women did not as a rule pursue such studies. It is easy to imagine what an impetus and an inspiration such a woman would be at the head of a new school established for the youth of a race for which high standards and lofty ideals had to be set. She was a woman with a strong, forceful personality, and showed tremendous power for good in establishing high intellectual standards in the public schools. Thoroughness was one of Miss Patterson's most striking characteristics as a teacher. She was a quick, alert, vivacious and indefatigable worker. During Miss Patterson's administration, which lasted altogether twelve years, three important events occurred: the name "Preparatory High School" was dropped; in 1877, the first high school commencement was held; and the normal department was added with the principal of the high school as its head.

After Miss Patterson had served one year as principal, Mr. Richard T. Greener was appointed in 1872 to take her place. As Miss Patterson was the first woman of color to be graduated from Oberlin College, so Mr. Greener has the distinction of being the first man of African descent to be thus honored by Harvard College. He received his preparatory education in Boston, Oberlin and Cambridge, and was graduated from Harvard in 1870. A scholar and lawyer by profession, Mr. Greener has attracted attention by his essays and orations. He has held a number of important positions, having served as Professor in the University of South Carolina in the Reconstruction period, Dean of the Law School of Howard University, Chief Civil Service Examiner for New York City, and United States Consul at Vladivostock, Russia. After serving as principal of the high school nearly one year, Mr. Greener left it for fields of broader opportunity. Miss Patterson was then reappointed principal of the Preparatory High School and held the position till 1884, when Mr. F. L. Cadozo, Sr., succeeded her.

When Mr. F. L. Cardozo, Sr., was appointed to the principalship of the high school, the standard of scholarship required of the principals was certainly maintained. For he had the rare distinction of being educated at Glasgow University, Glasgow, Scotland. There he won two scholarships of \$1,000 each in Greek and Latin. He also took a course in the London School of Theology, London, England, where he completed the three-year course in two years. He was once pastor of the Tremont Street Congregational Church, New Haven, Connecticut. Later he went to Charleston, South Carolina, where he engaged in missionary work in the employ of the American Board of Missions. Mr. Cardozo founded the Avery Institute in Charleston, and served as its principal until he became Treasurer of the State of South Carolina, in 1870. Under Governor Chamberlain he was Secretary of State for two terms.⁷

At that time there were 172 pupils in the school, but by 1886 the enrollment was 247, which was more than five times what it was when the school was established. In 1887-88, when the enrollment was 361, there were nine teachers, exclusive of the instructors in music and drawing. There was an increase of two teachers in 1888-89. From 1877 to 1894 the high school course consisted of three years' work. But in 1894 the course was enriched and enlarged by the addition of several electives and since then it has been lengthened to four years. The commercial department was established in 1884-85 and in 1887 a business course requiring two years of study was added. This with a technical course also requiring two years of study laid the foundation of the Armstrong Manual Training School. Girls were given an opportunity of taking up domestic science and boys military drill.⁸ Referring to the school in 1889-90 Superintendent Cook said: "This school is growing, not only in number but in a condition to perform better and more useful work. In the practical importance of subjects

⁷ Simmons, "Men of Mark," p. 428.

⁸ This is based on the Reports of the Board of Education of the District of Columbia.

taught and in their better and increasing provision for preparing pupils for business life there is recognition of the fact that practical usefulness is the great end of intellectual discipline." ⁹

It was during Mr. Cardozo's administration that the high school was moved from the Miner building to a new structure in 1891. So far back as 1874 Mr. Cook urged the construction of a suitable building for the high school. But it was not until 1889-90 that an appropriation therefor was made.¹⁰ This building, known as the M Street High School, was erected on M Street, near the intersection of New York and New Jersey Avenues, where the institution remained until it moved into the Dunbar.

In 1896 Dr. W. S. Montgomery was appointed principal of the M Street High School and held that position for three years. Dr. Montgomery was graduated at Dartmouth College, receiving the degree of A.B. in 1879 and the degree of A.M. in 1906. He completed the Howard University medical course in 1884. From the time Dr. Montgomery was appointed principal of the Hillsdale School in 1875 till the present, with the exception of two years spent in study at Dartmouth, he has served the public school system of the District of Columbia continuously.¹¹ In referring to his principalship of the M Street High School, one of his collaborators states that it "was marked by a period of constructive work. He stood for high scholarship with a leaning toward the classical high school."

⁹ Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public Schools, 1889-90, p. 175.

¹⁰ The site of the building cost \$24,592.50, the building itself cost \$74,454.88, the fixtures \$9,862.44, making a total expenditure of \$109,909.82. (See Report of the Board of Education of D. C., 1904-1905.)

¹¹ From 1875 to 1882 he was principal of a Grammar School. In 1882 he was appointed supervising principal and served in that capacity for fourteen years. In 1896 he was placed at the head of the M Street High School and served three years. In 1899 he was again appointed supervising principal and served two years. In 1900 he was made assistant superintendent for the colored schools and remained in that position for seven years. In 1907 he was appointed for the fourth time to a supervising principalship and holds this position at the present time.

Judge Robert H. Terrell succeeded Dr. Montgomery in 1899. He was the second principal of the high school to hold a degree from Harvard College. When a boy, he was a pupil in the public schools of the District of Columbia and was a member of one of the early classes in the old Preparatory High School. Mr. Terrell finished his preparation for college at Lawrence Academy, Groton, Massachusetts and was graduated from Harvard University in the class of 1884. In the fall of that year he was appointed a teacher in the high school and held that position for five years. In the fall of 1889 he was appointed chief of a division in the United States Treasury Department, where he served four years. In the meantime Mr. Terrell had studied law. He practiced that profession till 1889, when he was again appointed teacher in the high school. He was afterward promoted to the principalship. In 1902 President Roosevelt nominated him for a judgeship of one of the City Courts of Washington and Mr. Terrell resigned the principalship to accept this position. While serving as principal of the high school Mr. Terrell devoted much of his time out of school to preparing his boys for college. It is largely due to his influence that a goodly number of its graduates have completed their education at Harvard.

Mrs. Anna J. Cooper was appointed Judge Terrell's successor and served from 1901 till 1906. Mrs. Cooper prepared for college at the St. Augustine Normal School. Like Miss Patterson Mrs. Cooper was graduated at Oberlin College, receiving the degrees A.B. in 1884 and A.M. in 1888. With the exception of a few years Mrs. Cooper has taught in the public schools from 1887 to the present time. She is the author of "A Voice from the South," which received most complimentary notices in representative newspapers and magazines. During her administration in 1904 the course of study for the M Street High School like that of the other academic high schools was considerably changed and greatly enlarged.

Mr. William Tecumseh Sherman Jackson succeeded Mrs.

Cooper in 1906. He was educated at Amherst College which conferred upon him the degrees of A.B. in 1892 and A.M. in 1897. He thereafter pursued postgraduate studies at the Catholic University of America. Mr. Jackson's twenty-five years of service have all been in the high school. He was teacher of mathematics from 1892 to 1904, principal of M Street High School from 1906 to 1909 and has been head teacher in the Department of Business Practice from 1912 to the present time. In commenting upon Mr. Jackson's work, one of his superior officers declared that he "introduced the individual promotion system, stimulated interest in athletics and fostered the school spirit."

Mr. Edward Christopher Williams succeeded Mr. Jackson as principal of the M Street High School in 1909. He was graduated from the Central High School in Cleveland, Ohio, holds the degree of B.L. from the Western Reserve University, and an honor certificate from the New York State Library School. He was Librarian of the Western Reserve University from 1894 to 1909, and was instructor in bibliographical subjects in the Western Reserve University Library School from 1904 to 1909. After serving seven years as principal of the M Street High School, he resigned June, 1916, to accept a position in Howard University as Librarian and Director of the Library School. Mr. Williams achieved success as an administrative officer while principal of the M Street High School.

Mr. G. C. Wilkinson, the present principal of this school, was educated in the public schools of the District of Columbia, finishing the course at the M Street High School in June, 1898. He was graduated from Oberlin, with the degree of A.B. in 1902, and from the Law Department of Howard University in 1909. In 1902 he was appointed teacher in the M Street High School and discharged his duties in the new field of action with enthusiasm and zeal. During these years Mr. Wilkinson devoted much of his time after school hours to the training and instructing of athletic teams, particularly football and baseball, at a time when physical

training for high school boys was not an established part of the regular curriculum. This interest was not confined to M Street High School only but extended to all secondary schools of the vicinity and resulted in the formation of the Inter-Scholastic Athletic Association of the Middle Atlantic States under whose auspices track meets and basket ball were first introduced into the capital of the nation. Thus athletic interest was extended, until they were registered in the Amateur Athletic Union of America as the first and at present the only football officials of color in America. Mr. Wilkinson was equally active in assisting the military organization of the high school. In November, 1912, Mr. Wilkinson was promoted to the principalship of the Armstrong Manual Training School and transferred to the principalship of the Dunbar High School, July 15, 1916.

It is safe to assert that at the head of no school in the United States have there been teachers who have availed themselves of better educational advantages than have the principals of the high school for the education of Negroes in the District of Columbia. In looking over the list one observes that of the ten principals, who have guided and molded the school, two held degrees from Harvard University, three from Oberlin College, one from Dartmouth, one from Amherst, one from Western Reserve University, and one was educated in the University of Glasgow in Scotland.

But, however well-trained and strong the principal of a school may be, it is impossible for him to accomplish as much as he might, if his teachers also are not efficient and conscientious in the discharge of their duties. In this respect this high school has been greatly blessed, for the teachers have, as a rule, not only enjoyed superior educational advantages, but have faithfully discharged their duties. Although it is impossible in this article to mention by name all the teachers who have done so much to raise the standard of the high school to the enviable position it occupies to-day, no sketch, however short, could do the subject justice without reference to a few of the instructors who have been in the school almost from its establishment to the present time.

Among these none have rendered more valuable service than the late Miss Laura Barney, for many years a teacher of history and an assistant principal, Miss Carolina E. Parke, teacher of algebra, Miss Harriet Riggs, head of the English Department, Mr. Hugh M. Browne, instructor in physics, and Mr. T. W. Hunster, the organizer and director of the Drawing Department.

It would be difficult to name a high school, the graduates or former pupils of which have achieved success in such numbers and of such brilliancy as have those trained in the high school for Negroes in the District of Columbia. If one investigates the antecedents of some of the young Negroes who have made the most brilliant records at the best universities in the country, he will discover that a large number of them were trained in this high school. Miss Cora Jackson by competitive examination won a scholarship at the University of Chicago. Phi Beta Kappa keys have been won by R. C. Bruce at Harvard, Ellis Rivers at Yale, Clyde McDuffie and Rayford Logan at Williams, Charles Houston and John R. Pinkett at Amherst, Adelaide Cooke at Cornell, and Herman Drear at Bowdoin.

In scanning the list of the men and women whose foundation of education and usefulness was laid in this institution, one is surprised to see the wide range of positions they so creditably fill. In almost every trade and profession open to the colored American, from a janitorship to a judgeship, it is possible to find a man or a woman who has either completed or only partially completed the course of this high school. Mr. R. C. Bruce, a graduate of Harvard College, now assistant superintendent of colored public schools; Miss Nannie Burroughs, the founder and president of the National Training School for Women; Mr. Frederick Morton, principal of the Manassas Industrial School; Miss Marian Shadd, Mr. John C. Nalle, Major James E. Walker, supervising principals in the District of Columbia; Dr. John Smith, the statistician of the Board of Education; Miss Emma G. Merritt, director of primary instruction; Mr. Charles M. Thomas, a successful instructor in the Miner

Normal School; 36 out of the 47 principals of buildings and a large corps of efficient teachers of Washington, have all either been graduated from or pursued courses in this high school.

The first Negro who ever won the distinction of being commencement orator at Harvard College was Robert H. Terrell, who studied in the Preparatory High School shortly after it was established and who is now one of five justices in the Municipal Court of the District of Columbia, having been first appointed by President Roosevelt and then reappointed by Presidents Taft and Wilson. The first Negro who was ever elected class orator at Harvard University was Clement G. Morgan, another graduate of this high school. He was formerly a member of the Board of Aldermen in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is at present a lawyer of good repute.

The young man who won the Pasteur prize at Harvard University, who was twice chosen one of the three to represent Harvard in her debate, first with Princeton and then with Yale, the young man, who, in addition to all this honor, was finally elected class orator, was Roscoe Conklin Bruce, a former student of the same high school. A distinguished representative in the legal profession is Hugh C. Francis, who completed the four-year course in Harvard University in three years, then was graduated from the Harvard Law School with honor and is now practicing his profession in Porto Rico. Other representatives of the law are Albertus Brown, who served as a judge in Toledo, Ohio, for two days by appointment of the mayor, and Ferdinand Morton, Assistant District Attorney of New York City.

The record made by some of the high school graduates in the Army and Navy of this country has been very creditable indeed. When Dewey electrified the world on an eventful day in May some years ago, one of the seamen who aimed a gun straight and made it bark loud was a certain colored youth named John Jordan, who had studied in this same high school. It is even said by those in a position to know that he opened the battle of Manila. It is certain, how-

ever, that he was placed in charge of a crew of gunners in a forward turret, and that he was afterward promoted to the position of chief gunner's mate. For a time he was in Annapolis instructing classes in ordnance, the members of which were, of course, practically all white. Just a short time ago he was retired. Frank Stewart, another graduate of this school, served with distinction as a captain of the volunteer army during the Philippine campaign and was later made *presidente* of a town where he rendered further services with credit to himself and his country.

A few years ago Joseph Cook, another representative of this high school, taught classes in electricity in the training station at Newport. Cook ran a dynamo, an extremely complicated affair, on Admiral Sampson's ship during the Spanish-American war. For some reason he was assigned to other duty on the ship, was taken from the dynamo and a white man was put in his place. But the latter was unable to master the intricacies of the machine and was soon given other work to do.

Oliver Davis is another alumnus of this school. He is now a captain in the United States Army, being the first colored man from the ranks who passed an examination for a commission in the army. Three of the finest lieutenants in the Spanish-American War, Thomas Clarke, Harry Burgess and William Cardozo, were all trained at this institution. Under command of Major James E. Walker, another product of this school, the First Separate Battalion was the first organization to leave the District of Columbia for the Mexican border last summer, because this, the only colored unit in the District National Guard, was the first to be ready for such military service. Eleven of its officers are graduates of this high school. This battalion had the distinction of being generally lauded for the valuable services it rendered the country during the late unpleasantness with Mexico.¹² Among others who have distinguished themselves in mili-

¹² Among the officers are Captains C. C. H. Davis, S. H. Epps, L. H. Patterson, Lieutenants A. C. Newman, Principal of the Armstrong Manual Training School, B. D. Boyd, T. J. Abrams, C. King and R. A. Jackson, all products of this high school.

tary affairs are Eldridge Hawkins, Ex-Secretary of the American Legation at Liberia and for several years captain of the Liberian Constabulary. Joseph Martin also served as a lieutenant in Liberia.¹³

Graduates of this school have succeeded in all the walks of life. In music Captain Walter H. Loving is a distinguished representative indeed. He is the founder and director of the far-famed Philippine band, conceded by foremost musicians of the day to be one of the finest organizations of its kind in the whole world. This band has made extensive tours and has scored phenomenal success everywhere it has played. The credit due Captain Loving, who has now retired, is all the greater, when one considers, that when he commenced this work, a large proportion of the men not only knew little or nothing about music but nothing at all about the instruments they now play with such artistic skill. James Reese Europe is a composer of distinction and the leader of an orchestra which is constantly in demand among the most cultured and the wealthiest people of New York. Among these high school graduates there is at least one theatrical manager, in the person of Andrew Thomas, who has directed the affairs of the Howard Theatre with much success. Miss Mary P. Burrill and Mr. Nathaniel Guy, dramatic readers and trainers, deserve special mention for the service they have rendered the Washington schools and the community in their particular field.

Dr. Charles I. West, formerly assistant surgeon-in-chief of Freedman's Hospital, distinguished himself in a competitive medical examination held a few years ago, and is to-day one of the foremost physicians in Washington. Some of the wealthiest and most skillful physicians in the national capital, among whom may be mentioned Dr. John R. Francis, lately deceased, and Dr. Thomas Martin, received their scholastic training in this high school. There are other products of this school achieving success, both here and elsewhere, in the professions of medicine and dentistry.

¹³ He served in Liberia with Colonel Young, who organized the Liberian Constabulary.

It is very clear that this high school has given a wonderful intellectual impetus to the youth of Washington, many of whom would have been unable to get even a sip at the fountain of knowledge, if they could not have quenched their thirst without money and without price. Without the knowledge acquired in the high school it would have been impossible for many teachers to occupy the positions of usefulness, honor and emolument which they now hold. This high school too has been a great blessing, not only to those representatives of the race who live under the shadow of the capitol, but to many elsewhere. There is no doubt that a majority of the pupils trained in this school have reflected great credit upon their alma mater by doing their work in the world conscientiously and well. And here in Washington, if you meet a skillful physician, an excellent teacher, an expert typewriter or stenographer, a faithful, efficient letter carrier, a distinguished officer in the national guard, or a good citizen on general principles, you are likely to find a graduate of this high school or somebody who has studied there.

MARY CHURCH TERRELL.